

How should I pack my boxes?

There are a few basic rules to keep in mind when packing and labeling boxes for storage. Following them will save money and a great deal of difficulty when the boxes need to be located.

- **Determine the appropriate contents.** A box should contain only one kind (series) of records. The name of the records type should be a standard name that comes from our records retention schedule or File Plan. Refer to the file plan for cutoff dates and series information.
- **Create a File Folder index** for each box. Place a copy on top of the files in each box. To obtain the appropriate File Folder Index form refer to Records Management Procedure 5 - *Transferring Inactive Paper Records to Records Holding Area/Records Storage Facility*.
- **Do not over pack the boxes.** Leave a 1 to 2 inch space in each box to allow ease of reference. Do not put additional material on the bottom, side, or top of the records in the box.
- **Remove duplicate copies,** binders, hanging file folders, and any excess clips.
- **Mixed media** (e.g., computer diskettes, micro-film, or videocassettes) cannot be stored in the same environment as paper records. Please do not include these media in the same transfer with paper records without prior approval.
- **Clearly label the box.** The kind of record as well as the starting and ending date range should be clearly listed on the outside of the box.
- **Prepare the EMCBC Internal Records Transfer to Records Holding** form for each new transfer. To obtain the appropriate Transfer form refer to Records Management Procedure 5 - *Transferring Inactive Paper Records to Records Holding Area/Records Storage Facility*.

What else should I know?

The person searching for records may not be the same person ~ or even someone from the same department ~ who packed the box. Likely, they will know nothing about departmental acronyms, personnel names, and jargon specific to your area.

They may also recall records many years after the boxes have been sent to storage. Therefore, it is important to remember the following:

- *Always refer your department's File Plan. If you don't see what you need, contact records management staff for assistance.*
- *Don't use slang, acronyms, or other non-standard language in labeling boxes or in creating a folder index.*
- *Listings like "Joe Smith's records" or "miscellaneous records" are not helpful.*
- *Always list the date range of the records.*
- *Don't send old junk to storage. Only records approved for long-term storage in accordance with our records management policies should be archived. Other non-records can be shredded or otherwise destroyed.*
- Following these simple rules will help to save many thousands of dollars a year in storage and handling costs. In addition, the process of the records retrieval will also be more efficient and require less time and resources.



How Should I Pack Records for Storage?

A Quick Reference Guide



What should I do with my old records?



If you are listed as the office of record for a particular record series, you must keep your copy of the records for their full retention period.

If your office is not the office of record, you need not do so and should destroy your reference copies as soon as they are no longer needed.

Under no circumstances should you retain copies longer than the official retention period without first clearing it with records management staff.

Sooner or later, old records will fill up all of the space in your office area and you will have to do something with them.

When that happens, box them up and send contact records management staff to assist with transfer to the appropriate storage location.

That may seem like the end of the line for those records, but it is not. Records may need to be retrieved for:

- *Questions from customers, vendors, and other stakeholders*
- *Research within our organization*
- *Lawsuits*
- *Audits or questions from Congress or regulators*

Records must be located when it is time to destroy them. Contrary to what you may think, we don't keep all of our old records forever (only about 3% are kept permanently). If we kept them all, it would get very expensive. Therefore, we periodically destroy old records whose retention periods have expired.



The solution is to pack and label boxes clearly and accurately and to make sure that you (and the agency) have captured the right information for every box you send to storage

Why should I care what goes in each box?

In all of these cases, we search for boxes containing specific records from specific dates. There are several reasons why we need to be able to do so as quickly and accurately as possible.

- If we have a box stored at a Federal Records Center, every time they touch the box ~ to pull it from a shelf, to deliver it to us, to pick it back up from us and to put it back on the shelf ~ we are charged a fee, in addition to the monthly storage fee. If we have to pull a large number of boxes from storage in order to figure out which one contains the records that we need, it can get very expensive very quickly.

- If the records are being requested for a lawsuit, audit, or other legal process, we may be penalized if we cannot find the right records or if we are too slow in doing so.



We have thousands of boxes of records in storage, so as you can imagine, it would be difficult or impossible to simply look inside every one. You may already have had to pull boxes back from storage and search through them to find some records. If so, you'll understand what a problem and how expensive that can be.

Now multiply that cost across our entire office!

Records Management Contacts:

Jackie Schoultheis (513) 246-0227
Kathy Reid (513) 246-0607